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March 27, 2008

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**"Federal grants like these are essential to keeping our recovery efforts in south Louisiana moving along. They are real solutions for many people in the Third District who are still rebuilding their homes and communities, and I am pleased to announce them," said Rep. Melancon.**

"I am also happy to note that the hazardous debris removal grant for Plaquemines Parish has been increased over previous versions. It is so important that FEMA recognize the *actual* cost of these reconstruction projects, so that the people of Jefferson and Plaquemines Parishes don't have to carry an unfair portion of the burden alone."

The following grant increases were announced today:

- **Plaquemines Parish will receive \$1,954,318.20 for the testing and removal of asbestos-containing storm debris.** High winds, heavy rains, storm surge and flooding from Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures damaged and destroyed many structures in this coastal parish, including residential buildings. Because these severely damaged homes represented a threat to public health and safety, the Parish ordered them to be demolished. Many of the damaged residential properties had been designated as potentially containing dangerous asbestos materials.

The first version of this FEMA grant would have reimbursed Plaquemines Parish for the cost of testing, removal and disposal of the asbestos-containing materials in about 100 damaged structures, as well as the removal and disposal of 40 air conditioning units containing Freon. The version announced today expands the scope of the work that will be reimbursed and increases the grant amount to more accurately reflect the costs incurred by the Parish for this

project. In addition to the previously covered work, this amended grant will reimburse the Parish for disposing of 42,752 cubic yards (CY) of asbestos-containing material, 10,000 CY of non-asbestos-containing debris, 709 CY of crosstie timber, and for recovering 1,250 white goods (i.e., refrigerators).

- **Jefferson Parish will receive \$1,288,035 in federal aid for the demolition and debris removal of 750 homes damaged by Hurricane Katrina.** After the hurricane, the Army Corps of Engineers demolished more than 23,000 residential properties. After the discontinuance of the Army Corps' demolition program, Jefferson Parish was forced to cover the cost of demolishing an additional 750 additional properties on their own. The federal grant announced today will fully reimburse the Parish for the cost of demolishing these homes and removing the resulting 112,500 cubic yards of construction/demolition and vegetative debris.

### **Flood Mitigation Projects in Jefferson Parish**

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration, to reduce the loss of life due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in 2003 ranked Jefferson Parish as leading in repetitive loss properties (homes that have flooded multiple times) over Orleans Parish. The two projects announced today will significantly reduce the potential that the buildings in the program will sustain future flood damage, especially repetitive damage, thereby decreasing the amount of NFIP claims after future flood conditions. These projects will also incrementally improve the amount of flood resistant housing in the Parish.

Both projects are expected to be completed in approximately three years. The homeowners will then be required to maintain flood insurance for the lives of the properties. In both cases, other mitigation alternatives were considered, but reconstruction or elevation was deemed the most cost-effective mitigation action.

• **Pilot program in Jefferson Parish will receive \$2,920,909 in federal grants to rebuild 16 flood-prone homes, implementing flood-resistant building techniques.** This program will cover more than 60 percent of the cost of rebuilding 16 flood prone homes located throughout Jefferson Parish. The pilot program will implement the latest in flood-resistant building techniques and the homes will be elevated one foot above Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE). The homes will also be rebuilt in accordance with flood plain regulations for the Parish.

• **Jefferson Parish will also receive \$5,884,515 from FEMA to elevate 61 flood-prone homes.** This federal grant will fund 75 percent of the cost of elevating 61 homes that have flooded repeatedly in the past. The homes will be elevated to comply with the Advisory Base Flood Elevation, the latest building codes, and the Parish's flood plain regulations.

**"At their heart, these projects serve a simple and critical purpose: cleaning up the damage caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and helping families in south Louisiana rebuild higher and safer," said Rep. Melancon. "I will continue to support measures that provide real relief to the people of south Louisiana, while also working for more federal funding to rebuild our levee systems and better protect our homes, schools and communities from future storms."**

Rep. Melancon has worked in Congress to further reduce the financial burden on local governments in south Louisiana still struggling to recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In 2007, he worked with the Louisiana delegation and Congressional leadership to waive the 10 percent local government cost share requirement for disaster recovery projects and allow federal Community Disaster Loans to be forgiven for localities that can not afford to repay them.

Under the federal Robert T. Stafford Act, public assistance projects like those announced today required a 10 percent cost share from local governments upfront before the remaining 90 percent in federal grant money can be used. Many of the estimated 23,000 disaster recovery projects in Louisiana had been put on hold because local governments did not have the resources to provide the match. The local match requirement has been waived 32 times since 1985 when per capita rebuilding costs have been deemed excessive, but had not yet been waived for Katrina and Rita.

Rep. Melancon worked with House leadership to include the waiver of the 10% match in the Iraq/Katrina Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President at the end of May 2007. This bill provides a total of \$6.419 billion in hurricane recovery and relief funding for Louisiana and other Gulf Coast states.

In addition, Rep. Melancon successfully lobbied House leadership to include language in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill making Katrina- and Rita-affected communities eligible for forgiveness of their Community Disaster Loans. An estimated \$1 billion in CDLs were provided by the federal government to hurricane-affected local governments immediately following Katrina and Rita to help them continue daily operations, such as payroll for law enforcement and emergency responders. Many local governments do not have the ability to repay this massive debt, as their tax bases were devastated by the storms. Rep. Melancon argued that, in the past, CDLs have been forgiven following many other major disasters, including Hurricane Andrew and the September 11th terrorist attacks. With the passage of the Supplemental, Katrina and Rita CDLs became eligible for forgiveness, taking a huge financial burden off of local governments in south Louisiana.

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